A COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL'S AND TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF AT-RISK FACTORS: THE PHI DELTA KAPPA STUDY AND SELECTED OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOLS

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PREFACE

In the conduct of my professional day as an administrator in a public school, I have an opportunity to meet and get to know children from various backgrounds and with varying goals.

One of the most frustrating experiences for me has been to encounter students with no positive self-concept, let alone any goals for their future. To be sure, these students have a vague idea of what they would like to do but generally their "vision" is unrealistic because they do not have the necessary skills to be able to enter a technological society and succeed. Hence, they face an unstable and uncertain future without intervention of some kind.

Even worse than this frustration is the realization that many of these students leave school before graduation day, giving up on a system that could very well be their last hope.

This thesis was born in my heart the first time one of my students "walked out" and I realized that a life that had been "made in the likeness of God" had, at least for the moment, succumbed to the weaknesses of men.

With the impetus and patience provided by Dr. Deke Johnson and the additional direction of Dr. Gerald Bass and Dr. Ken Stern, a seed in my heart turned to a research project on paper. To Dr. William Segal, I express my appreciation for his last moment stand-in for Dr. Koetting.

This study would not have been possible without the cooperation of the administrators and staff of Kiefer, Drumright, Ripley, and Cushing High Schools.

My thanks also go to the teachers at Kellyville High School who helped establish a drop-out rate of less than three percent and who are a part of a positive learning environment for our students.

A special thank you goes to my wife, Connie, for her patience with me when I was trying to meet deadlines.

And last, a special word of appreciation to one high school teacher who was able to balance high expectations with a caring interest when it was most needed while I was in high school myself, my language arts instructor, Mrs. Christine Giffin of Richmond High School, Richmond, Maine.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

"COUNTY SEES RISE IN DROP-OUTS" was the wording of a headline of a major Oklahoma newspaper on July 7, 1989 (Todd, Tulsa Tribune). This focus was not surprising since a great deal of publicity has been given to the school drop-out rate in national publications during the past few years. In 1985, a demographic study indicated that "the national figure for all students has declined from 76 percent high school graduation to 73 percent" (Hodgkinson, 1985, p. 13).

Students who leave school before graduation become the unskilled, undereducated adults of the future. In a society that is becoming increasingly technical in its demands upon the labor force, larger numbers of unskilled adults can only add to that strain (General Accouting Office (GAO), 1986).

Even when members of the labor force attempt to educate drop-outs, the costs in terms of time and money can be staggering. Even worse, lost in the futile attempt to educate most of these individuals with severe learning inadequacies is the fact that such futility leads to a deeper slide into negative self-esteem (Carlson and Schaeffer, 1986).

The education system, as a microcosm of society, has a responsibility to stem the tide of the growing drop-out rate, even if by doing so, past and present mistakes must be admitted. The factors that cause students to believe that school is not for them must be isolated and addressed. Teachers and school administrators, as members of the very institution that may have contributed to the problem should be the first to help solve it (Conrath, 1986).

Confusion in the definition and/or identification of drop-outs has continued to be the national concern. In the news article referred to at the beginning of this chapter was a quotation attributed to a county superintendent of schools calling for a "consistent definition of a dropout". In light of this recent attention, particularly to high school attrition, an attempt needs to be made to more clearly define the drop-out problem by focusing on factors that contribute to this national phenomenon (Carlson and Schaeffer, 1986).

During the course of the 1988-89 school year, a study was conducted by member chapters of Phi Delta Kappa, an international organization of professional educators. That research project, entitled "A Study of Students At Risk", was designed to collect data from school personnel, specifically principals and teachers across the nation about characteristics of their schools and their students (Frymier, 1989). The questionnaires formed were in response to the four basic questions guiding the study itself:

1. Who is at Risk?

2. What are they like?

3. What is the school doing to help these students?

4. How effective are these efforts?

In addition, the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) researchers had already established 45 factors that they believed contributed to being at-risk (See Table VIII). All of the 45 factors related to five general areas of influence in a student's life that could affect their desire to remain in school. These five areas were family, peers, school, life events, and community. Questions in each of the separate questionnaires for the principal and teachers were formed to gain information about these five areas.

Another part of the PDK research, and one of the focal points for this study, was the development of what has come to be known as the "Holding Power Statistic". This statistic serves as a measurement of the ability of a school system to "hold" its students. Taken from a more popular approach, it can be compared to the inverse of a school's drop-out percentage. If a school's Holding Power is .81, it has retained 81 percent of its graduating class from the ninth grade, excluding normal transfers and withdrawals. It therefore has lost 19 percent of its students who are then classified as drop-outs.

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study was the lack of information from principals and teachers on a local level which can contribute to the

definition of an at-risk student and which can be compared to the national data derived from the Phi Delta Kappa study. A part of this problem was finding a consistent measurement of the degree of success or failure experienced by schools in an attempt to approach and deal with the drop-out problem.

It is possible that studies of schools in Oklahoma may provide some insights into what characteristics contribute to being at-risk and what these schools are doing to successfully or unsuccessfully deal with their potential drop-outs. Therefore, the primary task of this study was the accumulation of local school data that can contribute to the definition of the at risk student. One of the associated tasks was how to decide what kind of information was important about a school that would possibly have any impact on a student who was at-risk of dropping out. What good would it do to have a year-long basic skills course with one final competency exam if the community was extremely mobile and students entering at the start of school seldom finished at that school? To focus on the lack of data and enhance decison-making about what kind of information was important, the questionnaires used in the Phi Delta Kappa study were adopted for use in this research project.

A secondary task was to provide data showing any correlation between the national data from the Phi Delta Kappa study and the local data gained from this research study. Just how closely the local data matched with the national data would help build the strength of or decrease the impact of the conclusions of this research study.

A final task was measuring the degree of the success or failure experienced by schools in an attempt to approach and deal with the drop-out problem. In order to determine which schools were successful and how they get that way, the logical procedure was to rank the schools by their record of retaining students through the use of the Holding Power Statistic and then to focus on the practices of the school or schools with the highest holding power.

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of principals and teachers about factors in their schools, in their students' lives, and their communities that may contribute to a student being at-risk of dropping out of school and determine how this information relates to national research data.

More specifically, this study gained information about at-risk factors from the principals and teachers of selected Oklahoma high schools, compared this data with the national data compiled in the Phi Delta Kappa study, and applied the "Holding Power Statistic" to these same selected high schools.

Significance of the Study

Children are important! Just as important is what they think about their past, present, and future. If educators are interested in why some of these children have seemingly given up, they must confront their own inadequacies and failures, identify the environmental idiosyncracies of these children and their families, and seek ways to improve. By doing so, educators will discover positive characteristics of a school's climate or student's life

that can be used to teach educators and parents alike.

When educators have validated this important data and can lend strength to national research in the process, they will be better able to "defray" the costs to society and the individual self-esteem of the children who look to them for help.

Assumptions of the Study

One of the assumptions made in this study was that all of the information provided by Phi Delta Kappa in the research study of STUDENTS AT RISK was valid. The perceptions of at-risk factors and the relative importance of these factors was based on the validity of this national study. Although the Phi Delta Kappa study was not done randomly (any PDK Chapter could participate), the large number of participating chapters and the guidelines set forth by Phi Delta Kappa for each participating chapter to select a representative school in their area compensates and helped to support its authenticity.

Insofar as possible, threats to the internal validity of this local research study were controlled.

The instrumentation and testing process itself was identical to the national survey instrument used by Phi Delta Kappa researchers. One error in the teacher survey was discovered during the analysis process of the research study. Questions 61-90 which dealt with strategies and their effectiveness (See Appendix D) were preceded with directions telling the teacher to rate the effectiveness of each strategy on a continuum of one to four, yet the only options

for responses were "yes" or "no". Teachers in the local study (as well as the national study) simply ignored this part of the directions when confronted with the answer sheet options and responded "yes" or "no". Principals, however, did rate the effectiveness of each strategy on a continuum of one to four. As a result, no conclusions were drawn in the study that could have been based on any comparison of the principals' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies.

A potential limitation related to the external validity of this research was related to the interview with the principals. Principals who had become aware of the national scrutiny and the implementation of drop-out prevention programs might have responded differently to some of the questions than they would have a year previously. Since the Phi Delta Kappa research results were so new, this was unlikely.

Multiple treatment interference was controlled by making sure that each school in the study had not been involved in the Phi Delta Kappa study or in similar projects.

The only other foreseeable limitation was the Hawthorne effect. The mere knowledge of their participation in this study may have led the school administrators and staff members to be more positive in their assessment of at risk factors and less negative about what their school was doing about the drop-out problem.

Definitions

For purposes of this study, the following terms were defined as

follows:

Dropout - a child under the age of 18 who has not graduated from high school and is not attending any other school or receiving an education pursuant to law for the full term the school of the district in which he or she resides is in session (70 Oklahoma Statute, 1978).

At-Risk - likely to fail at school or fail at life; tendency to drop out of school (Frymier, 1989).

Holding Power - the computed measure of the proportion of former ninth grade students who graduate from high school four years later, taking into account those who are still in school, and accounting for those who left for reasons that are explainable (Frymier, 1989).

School Climate - the environment of a school created by the interrelationships of teacher perception about their students, the amount of responsibility for their student problems, and the amount of influence teachers felt they had over the student problems; related to school effectiveness.

Summary

Students are leaving school before graduation at an alarming rate. Factors that contribute to the decision to drop-out may be obscured by a lack of definition and focus as well as a passive approach to what is a costly problem to the nation.

There has been much interest in researching this phenomenon by educators, most recently the Phi Delta Kappa organization in "A

Study of Students At-Risk". In its attempt to gain information that might lead to identification of "at-risk" factors, Phi Delta Kappa employed a technique, called the Holding Power Statistic which measures the retention rate of students in a school and thus allows for comparative analysis with other schools.

Meeting the needs of the potential drop-out is a challenging process for the education system. An important step in the process will be to measure general perceptions about schools and students as well as the specific approaches used by schools to combat this growing trend. The accumulation of local information that can be used to validate or verify these general perceptions on the local level and national level is central to this research project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Traditionally, or at least in the early stages of American education, education past the eighth grade functioned to prepare able students for college. Today this role has changed to the idea that just about every boy or girl should graduate from high school. "Many educators say that one of the most important issues in education is determining ways to encourage students to complete high school" (Phi Delta Kappa, 1964, p. 1). This chapter will establish the reasons why students should complete high school, factors relating to why they elect to drop-out, and the strategies that schools use to combat the drop-out problem.

The Costs of Dropping Out

The importance of stopping or at least controlling the drop-out problem rests in public attention to the present or future costs to the school, society, and the individual drop-out himself/herself. From a purely organizational cost standpoint, "a drop-out is wasteful, since pupils entering a given cycle are supposed to aim at completing it within the prescribed period, the duration of that cycle" (UNESCO, 1972, p. 15). In this view, a student who drops out of school has caused the school to waste its cumulative investment.

Most students who leave school were retained in grade at least once (Frymier, 1989). According to a recent government report, being behind in grade level is "among the most powerful predictors for dropping out" (General Accounting Office [GAO], 1986, p. 13). Repetition of grade becomes a close relative of the drop-out syndrome and as such is also regarded as waste, "since repeaters reduce the intake capacity of the grade in which they repeat and thereby prevent other children from entering school or cause over-crowding of classrooms, thus increasing education costs" (UNESCO, 1972, p. 10).

Both the costs of education and of re-education can be staggering. In 1989, the average expenditure per pupil in the U.S. was $4,509 (Frymier, 1989). Using that figure as a base, taxpayers spent $14 million to reteach just the at-risk students identified in the Phi Delta Kappa study alone.

The problems presented to the school also translate into problems for society. Society "picks up the tab" in some form or other because of costs attributed to "additional welfare burdens, crime, and poor health" (GAO, 1986).

But of course the really important cost is the high toll on the individual himself/herself. Aside from the obvious potential self-concept problems emanating from an inability to live up to "societal expectations", there is the visible discrepancy in potential standards of living. The gap between earnings of male 20-22 year old drop-outs and high school graduates of the same age category had

increased from 12 percent in 1966 to 24 percent in 1978 (GAO, 1986).

Perspectives from Actual Drop-Outs

To gain an understanding of why students may be at-risk, it is important to gain a view of school from the perspective of the student who has already left for various reasons. The State of Oklahoma's Drop-Out Reports of 1987-88 and 1988-89 (Figures 1, 2, and 3) gave the readers some insight into students who leave school.

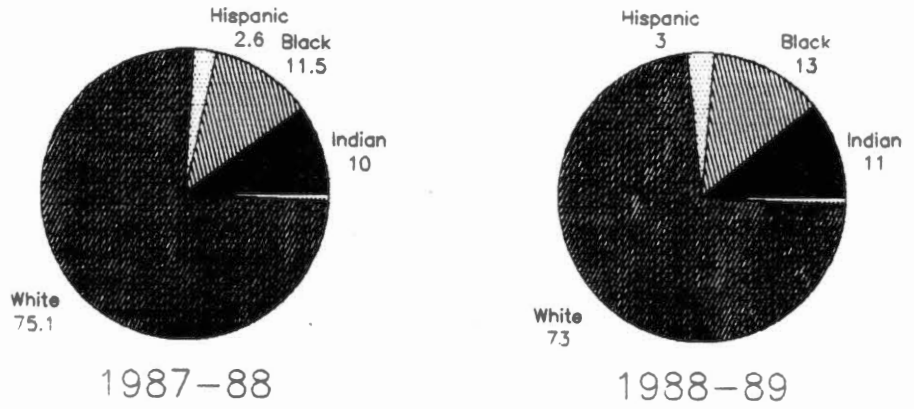

Figure 1. Dropout Percentage by Race

Information from Figure 1 dispels the idea that the majority of drop-outs come from minority groups. Over 70 percent of the dropouts in Oklahoma in the above years were white.

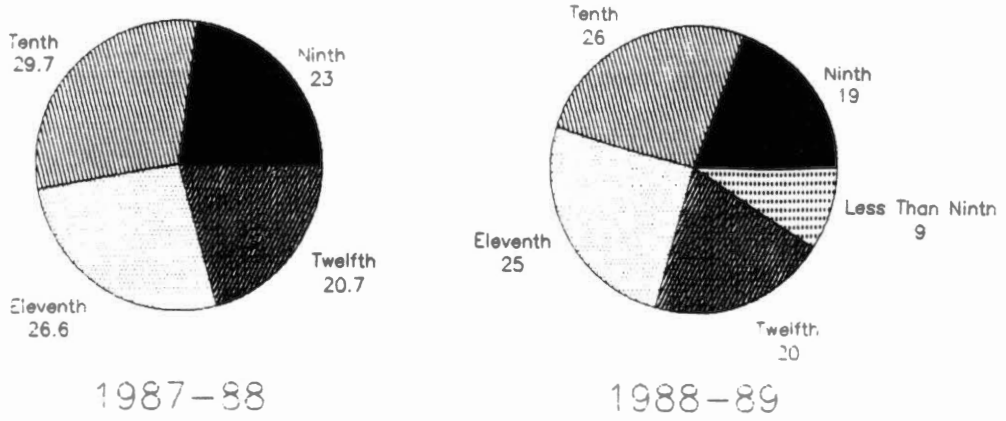

Figure 2. Dropout Percentage by Grade

Figure 2 shows that the most likely time for leaving school is during the tenth and eleventh grade year. The statistics also show that during the 1988-89 school year, nine percent of the reported drop-outs left school before the ninth grade.

1987-88 Reasons		1988-89 Reasons	
Non-Attendance	42.3%	Non Attendance	50.0%
Lack of Interest	39.7%	Lack of Interest	33.2%
Behavior Difficulty	5.2%	Behavioral Difficulty	4.6%
Needed at Home	3.5%	Marriage	2.8%
Marriage	3.1%	Employment	2.6%
Employment	2.5%	Needed at Home	2.2%
Pregnancy	2.3%	Pregnancy	2.2%
Physical Illness	1.0%	Physical Illness	0.9%
Academic Difficulty	0.7%	Academic Difficulty	0.6%
Economic Reasons	0.6%	Economic Reasons	0.6%
Entered Armed Forces	0.2%	Entered Armed Forces	0.2%
Physical Disability	0.1%	Physical Disability	0.1%
Other	0.0%	Other	0.0%
Unknown	0.0%	Unknown	0.0%

Figure 3. Reported Reasons for Dropping Out

There were two primary reasons (Figure 3) for leaving school that were cited by the dropouts themselves: lack of interest and non-attendance. These general reasons point to a need to get more specific information about droupouts. There had to have been objective events and facts in their lives at home and school which led them to the point of giving up on school. "Lack of interest" doesn't tell researchers the specifics about what they lost interest in and "non-attendance" tells researchers that they "gave up" a lot earlier than their official drop-out date.

The Actual Drop-Out

Research has added tremendous focus to actual characteristics of students who already have dropped out of school. It has been noted that many dropouts are older than their classmates (Green, 1966). According to Green, this would be a natural result of being retained in grade. Not surprisingly, these students, while in school, will discover that they are academically slower, have more difficulty relating to other students and have fewer friends.

Green also contended that the condition of the home is another factor that has received a fair amount of research. Children depend on others for support in time of need. The best place outside of school for this to happen is in the home. Some parents do not provide this support, either because they themselves dropped out of school or their basic attitudes are negative toward education and/or school. The level or quality of education of the parents is therefore related to the drop-out problem (Green, 1966). Such

family environments for students to grow up in lead to a serious undermining of the trust of a child in the adults around him/her and can lead to a child who, in the words of Daniel Shreiber (1964), a noted counselor/therapist, is "situationally disturbed", as opposed to being emotionally disturbed.

Studies also show that drop-outs were generally two years behind in reading ability (Howard, 1972). The relationship between intelligence and achievement is a point of concern in the quest for information about what makes a student tend to drop out. Drop-outs should not be equated with low achievers or for that matter, people of low intelligence. Low achievers have the intellectual ability but have not had enough successful experience to allow them to rely or to trust in their own abilities (Lehr and Harris, 1988). Although most drop-outs lack successful experiences that might allow them to trust in themselves, their ability to solve problems is hampered, as already stated, by a low reading level.

There are indications that some at-risk students are so because society's institutions are not able or interested in meeting their intellectual needs. From this different vantage point, it is interesting to note that some intelligent "individuals disliked school, electing to drop out in order to salvage the time so vital to prepare, in their own quicker ways, for future accomplishments" (Hammer, 1970, p. 8).

The lack of peer support for potential drop-outs can also have a serious negative impact. Remembering that the at-risk student is behind in grade level and separated from his/her original friends,

it should not be surprising that this student naturally seeks out those in the system who come most closely to his/her view of life, other drop-outs (Green, 1966). While seeking out this new peer group, it becomes easier to rationalize by concluding that they are "unpopular" with other students. The results of this process are more disciplinary problems in school and alienation from school life (Presseisen, 1988). Feelings of alienation can also be what leads likely drop-outs away from the typical involvement of students in school life. There are an "overwhelming number of studies which reveal that drop-outs do not participate in school activities" (Green, 1966, p. 29).

To summarize, the majority of research prior to 1980 revealed several typical characteristics of the school drop-out who has been historically referred to as a student of school age who is not attending school or receiving an alternative education.

Searching for Characteristics of "At-Riskness"

A more detailed <u>preventive</u> approach has been taken recently toward defining the potential drop-out, including the factors that contribute to this potential. The common approach in the late 1980's and into the 1990's was to view the potential drop-out as a "student at-risk", meaning a student who is "likely to fail at school or fail at life" (Frymier, 1989, p. 14). Based on research formerly conducted with drop-outs, it was possible to develop a research base around the potential drop-out.

A Blueprint for Success, a set of principles developed by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education served as another stimulus for researching this current problem. These sets of principles demand, among others, intervention at an early age and direct involvement with parents, expecting involvement by parents (Rhodes, 1987).

The Phi Delta Kappa Research Project

A major source of research for this study were the data compiled by Phi Delta Kappa, in what has become a major research study. Phi Delta Kappa received information from at least 100 regional chapters. It began the research in 1987 by rank ordering the issues seen as critical by the year 1990. The top issue was "at-risk/ neglected/abused students" (Frymier, 1989, p. 4) (See Appendix E) and a major study was undertaken to identify "at-risk" factors.

In that study, as part of their commitment to the improvement of education, the Phi Delta Kappa researchers assumed that there were five sets of conditions which affected the potential for a student to be "at-risk": family, peers, school, life events, and community. Related issues included demographic changes, public confidence in education, and school effectiveness.

With the exception of one case study of an actual student in each school, all information gained was from professionals in the field. Questionnaires and interviews were carefully conducted to ensure reliable and valid input from every participating school.

School Climate

As one of the five sets of conditions, school effectiveness was an important consideration in that study and this research project. If frustration is a major cause of poor school climate in today's school, a vast number of our schools are ineffective and thus unable to provide the most positive environment for students in general, let alone specific students who may be "at-risk".

This frustration has been brought on by the need for schools (teachers) to deal with numerous classroom problems, the root causes of which may be out of their control such as divorce, single parents, working mothers, television, etc. Compounding the frustration "is a tendency in many schools . . . to close down traditional channels of communication and to lose the relationships of trust and confidence that once were typical" (Genck, 1983, p. 40).

When teachers and administrators perceive their professional environment in a negative manner, this will undoubtedly affect decisions about students who may drop-out. By example, several questions put forth by the Phi Delta Kappa researchers dealt with how teachers perceived their students in various areas of performance, i.e. attendance, academic ability, how responsible they felt about their students problems, and who was most responsible among parents, students, and teachers for solving those problems. It would not be hard to recognize a shortcoming in the school climate if teachers felt very responsible for a particular issue but had little control over it.

At-Risk Factors

Ediger (1987), in SCHOOL DROPOUTS, ABSENTEEISM, AND TARDINESS, suggested that absence from school or class in any form creates an environment where sequential learning can not occur and subject matter and skills can not be developed. This dilemma is brought on in part by the disintegration of the family unit, when the student becomes entangled in a dissent oriented climate and normal means of control (even in school attendance) are not exercised.

Educational researchers have examined absenteeism as another source of identification of at-risk students. Absenteeism traits can range from a simple reluctance to go to school at an early age to tardiness while in school to outright truancy. Truancy was applicable to this study as it usually is quite detectable by high school age. Truancy has been found to have a consistent positive correlation with families "with criminal parents and delinquent siblings and with the parents having poor child-rearing behavior" (Hersov and Berg, 1980, p. 55).

Other "at-risk" factors include low income background, very low basic academic skills, "especially reading and math . . . having parents . . . who do not provide a support system for academic progress, and are usually very alienated from school" (Hodgkinson, 1985, p. 13) Low academic achievement has also been traced to children whose fathers are absent for one reason or another. Such findings point to the need to get at the core of at-risk characteristics.

Recent trends indicated that socioeconomic factors may also play a large role in contributing to being at-risk. An indirect tie can be made between a student's socioeconomic level and his or her self-concept (Mink and Kaplan, 1970).

Other research findings indicated that factors such as school size, disciplinary incidents, and diversity of the student population can have an impact on the number of students who are potential dropouts (Bergman, 1989).

Differences in Research

It should be noted that research about at-risk students has not been consistent. Discrepancies exist among findings and disagreements exist among researchers.

For example, some clinical therapists believe it in the best interest of a child to retain them. According to one such practitioner, "sixty- seven of the last hundred children seen by our clinic service in 1970 needed to be put back into the grade level below their present grade" (Ames, et al., 1972, p. 55).

Some researchers are careful to distinguish factors leading students to drop out from underachievement. Many underachievers go on to college and are described by some as "a bit flat emotionally, not very involved in class, and at the same time not giving anybody a major problem", not necessarily consistent with the drop-out (Griffin, 1988, p. 8).

So there are times when it would be appropriate to retain a student and times when we must be able to discern the difference

between underachievement and "at-riskness".

Positive Strategies

Another way of looking at the at-risk factors is to evaluate education programs believed to be successful. Seventy-nine percent of alternative schools for example, report "that basic skills are the point of primary content emphasis" (Raywid, 1986, p. 49).

Emphasizing the need for basic skills competency is one way to allow "at-risk" students a "new lease on life". That is, their self-concept, usually poor because they are discouraged and/or defeated learners, is elevated if their competency in basic skills is increased. Model schools, such as Fleming Middle School in Grants Pass, Oregon have a formal identification process that focuses on high absence rates and provides opportunities for students to succeed at various enterprises (Dawson, 1987).

Increasing achievement levels in general is another approach taken by schools. One of the means used to accomplish this end was to provide extra instructional assistance in required course areas through coaching classes and computer-assisted and tutorial instruction. Some successful schools even offer intensive summer instruction programs for identified students (McPartland and Slavin, 1990). The assumption about at-risk factors here was that students who are in danger of dropping out are in need of more individual attention.

The Focus Dissemination Project of Saint Paul, Minnesota is another program that is working. This program provides the potential drop-out with a "school within a school" where he/she is closely involved in group counseling along with instruction in the basics. FOCUS attempts to provide a family orientation to school, hoping to develop feelings of caring and self-worth (National Diffusion Network, 1989).

Still another program is the Diversified Educational Experiences Program (DEEP), based in Wichita, Kansas. DEEP emphasizes "success for every learner while decreasing learner hostility to educational institutions" (National Diffusion Network, 1989, p. C-9).

Research has led to many proposals for keeping the at-risk student in school. On a general level, there are calls for vision, restoring the human-centered base, interaction, and empowerment (Rhodes, 1987). These ideas can be translated into practical, easy to understand (not necessarily easy to implement) objectives for schools. For example, researchers agree that smaller class sizes are necessary to allow more chance for one on one interfacing at school between educators and at-risk students (Green, 1966).

Cooperation among teachers in decision-making is also needed since the communication between classrooms lends to cohesiveness that will be visible to those who most need it (Phi Delta Kappa, Drop-Outs, Pushouts, and Other Casualties, 1987).

Opportunities for experiential learning is another suggested idea proposed by those who would see the at-risk student succeed in

school. Development of vocational skills was seen as the primary method of providing this opportunity as early as the 1970's (Howard, 1972).

Holding Power

It was related in the previous chapter that solutions to the drop-out problem have been slower in coming because schools have lacked clear focus on what conditions must exist for a student to be classified as a drop-out. Some schools report students who have been jailed as drop-outs, others have not kept accurate records and end up classifying some transfer students as drop-outs (Todd, 1989).

Quitting school is largely a matter of choice for students. Students who leave school because of transfer, incarceration, or death are not "choosing" to. Accordingly, there needs to be an approach to describing a drop-out in a manner that reflects the school environment in an accurate way.

In this age of public awareness and the need for positive communication, the response to this challenge of classifying drop-outs has been to focus instead on a school's ability to help its students graduate. This ability of a school to retain its students is its "Holding Power" (Frymier, 1989).

The "holding power" of a school is expressed as a percentage statistic which accounts for students who have left school "not by choice" through death, transfer, or incarceration. The birth of this statistic has been a positive response to the need for a clearer definition of a drop-out and to enable the reseracher to

deal more specifically with actual at-risk factors.

Summary

The complexity of the drop-out problem points to the need for continual gathering of data. In the end, any information about schools will be valuable in determining what factors really contribute to being "at-risk" and the strategies used by the schools to confront the problem.

With so many factors existing within a school, Phi Delta Kappa researchers formulated a process and survey instrument that addressed each of the preceding factors. The instrumentation and research process will be discussed in the next chapter of this paper.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The process of gathering information about elements in an "at-risk" student's life involved making decisions about the testing instruments, selecting the participants, and conforming the data-gathering techniques as closely as possible to the same techniques used in the national Phi Delta Kappa study. This chapter discusses the instrumentation used in the research and the focus needed on aspects of the principal's and teacher's perceptions of at-risk factors, the actual procedure used, and a discussion regarding the calculation of the Holding Power Statistics.

Instrumentation

Two sources of data were used for this research study. The national data for this study came from the 1989 Phi Delta Kappa study of Students At-Risk. The task of obtaining the data was organized into 13 "jobs" (See Appendix A). Two of these "jobs" (4,5) carried with them the responsibility to collect information about students from teachers and principals across the United States (See Appendix B) Complete data on 22,018 students was collected.

One of the first steps in this writer's research project was to analyze these data from teachers and administrators. Principals

had been interviewed personally and asked to respond to 156 questions regarding enrollments, policies, the community, staff, and students. Teachers were asked to respond to approximately 100 questions concerning their perceptions about all students in their school as well as students who may have been at risk.

Copies of each of the questionnaires are provided in Appendix C and Appendix D. Since each questionnaire is extensive in its own right, the primary focus for analysis and comparisons in this study was in the following four areas relating to school climate, the family, and the community:

1. The perception of degrees of problems such as attendance, completing assignments, arguments with teachers, fighting among students, theft, drug use;

2. The socioeconomic level and mobility/stability of the community;

3. Discipline and academic failure in school; and

4. The perception of new programs and their impacts.

The local data were obtained by using the same instruments and techniques adopted by Phi Delta Kappa researchers with a group of randomly selected schools from the geographic area served by the Drumright Central Area Vocational-Technical School.

Procedure

The selection of the study group was done randomly by lot from a group of high schools located in the Creek County area of Oklahoma.

Although this geographical area may not be representative of all of Oklahoma, an attempt was made to ensure that stratified sampling would help the generalizability of the research to schools within the same stratification. A descriptive analysis of the affected counties was also done.

There are sixteen independent school districts in the Creek County area that "feed" into the Drumright Central Area Vocational-Technical School. These schools, according to a recent research study done by the Oklahoma Child Service Demonstration Center headquartered in Cushing, Oklahoma, are located in areas that are

> . . . primarily rural, and have experienced a severe economic decline since 1982. Over 50 percent of students in the service area are enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs, and the dropout rate has increased to 25 percent (p. 1).

The school districts, listed by total enrolled ninth graders in 1985, are: Sapulpa (485); Cushing (165), Cleveland (162), Mannford (141), Bristow (130), Stroud (92), Kellyville (90), Drumright (77), Yale (60), Mounds (55), Kiefer (50), Olive (48), Depew (40), Davenport (33), Oilton (32), and Ripley (26).

These schools were divided into four groups of four from the largest to the smallest. The first group included Sapulpa, Cushing, Cleveland, and Mannford. The second group made up the next four largest schools, and so on so that the last group was made up of Depew, Davenport, Oilton, and Ripley. One school was randomly selected by lot from each group. The schools selected were: Cushing, Drumright, Kiefer, and Oilton. Oilton officials declined to participate and the district was replaced by Ripley.

The next step in this research was to contact the principal of each school and solicit their involvement. The principal's interview questionnaire and teacher's survey for the specific school were then delivered.

Principal Interview Questionnaire

The four principals were given a copy of the questionnaire (See Appendix C) beforehand so that the factual information could be available. Then, each principal was personally interviewed by the researcher following the questionnaire format exactly. The interviews with the principals were scheduled independently from the teacher survey procedure and complete anonymity was assured with all four principals.

Teacher Survey

Teachers were first asked by their principals if they would be willing to participate in the local study of at-risk students. The faculties of all four schools responded positively to this and at respective faculty meetings, were given a copy of the survey instrument and asked to complete it and return it to the secretary's office within one week, preferably one day. Teachers were told not to identify themselves or their schools and were guaranteed complete anonymity. In contrast to the interview format of the principals, teachers recorded their responses on a separate answer sheet (See Appendix D). Completion of the survey took 30 to 45 minutes and the completed answer sheets were collected in a separate envelope. In

this way, the researcher was able to distinguish between schools for recording purposes. A return visit was made to each school to pick up the completed surveys.

In all four schools it was communicated that the intent of the process was to conduct the teacher survey and principal interviews separately, that teachers were to answer the questions based on their own perceptions, and that the teacher responses would not be available to the principals or vice versa.

The principals' responses were received after each principal was given a copy of the questionnaire and had filled it out. Three of the principals were then interviewed personally with the format of the interview following the questionnaire format exactly. One principal provided the completed questionnaire in lieu of an interview.

The teacher surveys and principal interviews were conducted and results received during December, 1989 and the spring of 1990. The results were tabulated for statistical analysis during the summer of 1990. Each school was assigned a letter for confidentiality and identification purposes and totals were recorded by school, teacher, and principal.

After all local data were received and compiled, a descriptive analysis was made to describe the data with specific attention to the four general areas described previously. Subsequent to this descriptive analysis, an analysis was done to find any relationship between the local data and the national data gained by the Phi Delta Kappa study.

Calculating the Holding Power Statistic

The Holding Power Statistic (See Appendix F) was calculated for each of the four high schools as one of the last data-gathering steps. This statistic is expressed as the percentage of students in a previous ninth grade class that actually graduate within four years or are still enrolled, accounting for students who have transferred out of the district, been incarcerated, or have died.

Access to the individual school transcripts/records was needed for this step. The total enrollment of the 1984 freshman class (A), total number of (A) who graduated in 1988 (B), total number of students graduating early (C), those who transferred to another school (D), total number who were jailed (E), number who died (F), and total number of students still enrolled (G) was ascertained and placed into the following formula for calculation:

$$\frac{B + C + G}{A - (D+E+F)} = \text{HOLDING POWER STATISTIC}$$

This Holding Power Statistic (HPS) opened up many avenues of comparison to principal and teacher information about the various factors leading to being at risk and programs being implemented to address the problem. This application of the HPS was the significant practical purpose of this research.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the information gained from the principals and teachers is presented in six different categories. First, data received about the demographics of the two counties represented by the four participating schools are offered. Then, data from the local teachers are presented, followed by important information from the local principals. The next two categories were reserved for comparisons between local and national data from the teachers and principals, respectively. The final category of data analysis pertains to the two schools that were compared by Holding Power Statistics.

Demographic Characterisitics

The four schools participating in this research project were located in two different Oklahoma counties, Creek and Payne. Based on information gained from the 1980 Census, the similarities of both counties are shown in Table I.

The last similarity was particularly significant since children under six in 1980 raised in a below poverty home would, according to some researchers, tend to be prime candidates for being at-risk in the time period of this research, some 10 years later.

TABLE I

COUNTY CHARACTERISTICS

Category	County Creek	Payne
Large White Majority	90%	92%
Unemployed (over 16 years of age)		
Males	3.8%	3.8%
Females	4.2%	4.5%
Similar Incomes		
Median	$17,497	$16,495
Mean	$19,860	$20,003
Families Below Poverty Level with Children Below Age 6	13.4%	13.6%
299 out of 2,225 (Creek) 304 out of 2,236 (Payne)		

Statistical School Data

Specific information about individual schools cannot be referred to for the sake of confidentiality, but a general overview is important here (Table II).

The return rate was low for school D. But comparison of teacher survey and principal interview responses from this one school showed general agreement. Conclusions concerning the reasons for the low return rates are drawn in Chapter V.

TABLE II

STATISTICAL SCHOOL DATA, RESPONSES AND HOLDING POWER

School	Number of Teacher Responses	Holding Power
A	11	.78
B	16	.89
C	16	.81
D	12	.81

The percentage of returns for all teachers in all schools was 65 percent. There was no method of determining the strength of non-responders in the study but this particular problem primarly applied to the responses from school D as already mentioned.

Organization of Data

The results of the surveys were organized into two areas and presented under each of the major analyses. The responses of teachers and principals regarding perceptions of their students in relation to the school climate were found in the first part. Perceptions about how their students rated in attendance, completion of assignments, arguments with teachers, crime, and drug abuse were recorded. As noted earlier, these perceptions contribute to a school's climate that can have a great impact on students who may be at-risk. The second part of each instrument deals with strategies

used by the local schools to deal with their at-risk students.

Local Teacher Perceptions

Teacher perceptions were measured by responses to questions regarding their students' attendance, completion of assignments, student arguments, behavior, use of alcohol and drugs, and crime as well as their feelings regarding strategies used in their schools and their effectiveness.

Attendance

The vast majority of teachers (over 80%) rated their students average or above in daily attendance; with 11 percent rating their students lowest on the scale. There was consensus that daily attendance was less under the control of the teacher and more in the hands of parents.

Completion of Assignments

There was greater consistency between teachers' feelings about sources and amount of responsibility and their perceptions of their own students with regard to completion of assignments. The majority of students were rated at least average or better (65%) and 69 percent of the respondents felt a higher degree of responsibility for what the student learned while 57 percent felt that they had much influence over their students completing of assignments. The teachers felt that students were most responsible for completion of assignments (61%) and not teachers (11%). Their perception of the

students in their classrooms (average or better) was not inconsistent with their philosophies.

Student Arguments

A minority of teachers believed that student arguments with their teachers were a serious problem. On the continuum of one to five with five being a very serious problem, 34 percent of the teacher respondents marked three, four, and/or five. Only 5 percent marked a five.

Substance Abuse, Crime, Alcohol Abuse, and Behavior

Teachers responding to the study believed students were confronted more with alcohol abuse outside of school than substance abuse and crime combined. With all three of these factors, teachers (approximately 80%) looked upon parents as being most responsible for helping their students cope with their out-of-school problems. Approximately one quarter of the respondents felt very responsible for helping students cope with substance and alcohol abuse, while only 15 percent felt very responsible for helping students cope with crime.

Crime was not considered a problem for students outside of school. Eighty-six percent of the surveyed teachers responded with a three or lower to indicate that their students were confronted less with crime than students in other schools.

Perceptions about how students behaved in classes were positive in nature. Students general behavior in class was considered average or above by 83 percent of the teachers.

Strategies for At-Risk Students

In this category, teachers were asked to respond to whether they regularly used specific strategies when working with their specifically "at-risk" students and whether that strategy was effective or not (Table III). The most used strategy was "notifying parents" with 96 percent of the teachers saying they used it regularly followed by "conferring with parents" (91%), "spending more time on basic skills" (91%), "emphasizing thinking skills" (85%), "special education (83%), and "individualizing instruction" (85%). Over 75 percent said "vocational courses" were also used to deal with students who were "at-risk".

Effectiveness

Teachers had different perceptions however about the effectiveness of these strategies. Only 64 percent felt that notifying the parents was worthwhile, and less than 75 percent thought that conferring with parents, emphasizing thinking skills, or spending more time on basic skills did any good.

TABLE III

LOCAL TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO STRATEGIES USED IN THEIR SCHOOLS TO HELP AT-RISK STUDENTS

Strategy	Do You Do This Regularly?		Is it Effective?	
	Yes %	No%	Yes%	No%
Smaller classes	60	40	78	22
Computerized instruction	29	71	54	46
Special teachers	52	48	73	27
Peer tutoring	57	43	81	19
Retain in grade	28	72	30	70
Special education	83	17	84	16
Vocational courses	76	24	87	13
Alternative school	26	74	60	40
Special study skills	44	56	63	37
Special textbooks	53	47	68	32
Place in low group	26	74	36	64
Emphasize coping skills	58	42	69	31
Flexible scheduling	53	47	65	35
Individualize instruction	85	15	91	9
Home tutoring	28	72	64	36
Extra homework	21	79	24	76
Emphasize thinking skills	85	15	72	28
Restrict from sports	66	34	63	37
Refer to psychologist	46	54	57	43
Refer to social worker	50	50	65	35
Confer with parents	91	9	75	25
More time on basic skills	91	9	66	34
Eliminate art and music	8	92	14	86
Notify parents	96	4	64	36
Chapter I program	39	61	67	33
Teacher aides	38	62	65	35
Say "leave at age 16"	2	98	19	81
Before school programs	37	63	52	48
After school programs	34	66	54	46
Summer school programs	42	50	68	32

But there was a marked increase in perceptions of effectiveness for individualizing instruction (91%) and using vocational courses (87%), even though these strategies may not have been used regularly. Other strategies gaining high perceptions of effectiveness while not being used as much in practice were peer tutoring (81% thought it effective to 57% who used it regularly), special teachers (73% compared to 52% who used it), and smaller classes (78% to 60%).

Telling at-risk students to "leave at 16" and eliminating art and music from their educational opportunities were judged soundly ineffective (over 80%) and almost all teachers (over 90%) stated that these strategies were not practiced in their schools.

Local Principal Perceptions

Principals were asked to fill out their questionnaires and be prepared for an interview which would be based entirely on the questionnaire itself. Although all four principals responded, the strength of their perceptions was in their agreement or differences with their staffs and the entire group of teachers who responded on those topics that were common to both. Those topics specifically were attendance, assignment completion, arguments with teachers, drug use, crime, and programs/strategies and their effectiveness.

Unique Socio-Economic Insights

Principals provided unique insights into their schools and communities that were not provided by the teachers. The estimated

socio-economic background of the student population's families were: 10.5 percent professional, 11.3 percent technical, 32.5 percent skilled labor, 35 percent unskilled labor, and 10.7 percent unemployed. Three of the four described their communities as moderately stable in terms of people moving in or out while one principal described his community as moderately mobile.

The percentage of students in each school who received free or reduced lunch or breakfast ranged from 25 to 55 percent with the average being 40.3 percent.

Discipline

The proportion of students who had been suspended from either of the four schools ranged from zero to eight percent of the student bodies during one year with an average of 3.5 percent for all four school districts. Very few students were expelled from school for the duration of the school year (less than one percent of the total student population).

There was a wide range of responses to the survey item regarding the percentages of students who had failed one or more courses in the last year. Three principals responded with 5 percent, 14 percent, and 25 percent respectively with one principal not reporting.

All four administrators considered arguments with teachers and fighting among students as problems that were not serious in their schools but that attendance was somewhat serious while three thought that attendance and completion of assignments were at least somewhat

of a serious problem.

Use of drugs was not considered a serious problem by two of the principals while two thought this problem was somewhat serious.

Programs

Of the new programs made available to all schools in recent years, all four respondents stated that they had increased requirements for graduation, developed mandatory testing programs for students, and restricted participation in extra-curricular activities. All four felt that teachers were positive about increased graduation requirements and restricting participation in activities for non-achievers.

Mandatory testing programs for teachers received a negative response along with increased requirements for teacher evaluation, but the principals believed that the rest of the new programs existing at their schools were received with no feelings at all or in a positive way by teachers and students.

Strategies

Of the strategies employed by their schools to deal with students who were "at risk", there was unanimous agreement on notifying and conferring with parents, spending more time on basic skills, individualizing instruction, utilizing special education placement, and using special teachers. As with the responses of the teachers, there was clearly no unanimity on the effectiveness of

these strategies. All four administrators responded that they did not regularly use the practice of saying "leave at 16" or eliminating art and music.

Comparison of Local Teacher and Principal Data

Both teachers and principals agreed that arguments with teachers and classroom discipline were not serious problems in their schools. Most of the principals (3) and almost 80 percent of the teachers thought that completion of assignments was a somewhat serious problem while attendance was considered more of a problem by the administrators than by the teachers.

Of the strategies perceived to be employed by all schools, with the exception of "emphasizing thinking skills", principals and teachers were in close agreement on the same strategies (Figure 4).

Comparison of Local Data to National Data

In the following section, the local research data gained from the four schools will be compared to the national data gained from the Phi Delta Kappa research study. Specifically, the focus was on teacher and principal survey results. It should be noted that the results of the national teacher survey include responses from elementary and junior high teachers as well as high school teachers (Table IV, V, and VI comparisons).

The purpose of examining the similarities and differences between both of these studies is not to discover exact correlational

The purpose of examining the similarities and differences between both of these studies is not to discover exact correlational relationships but to provide the researcher with some idea of the validity of the local data.

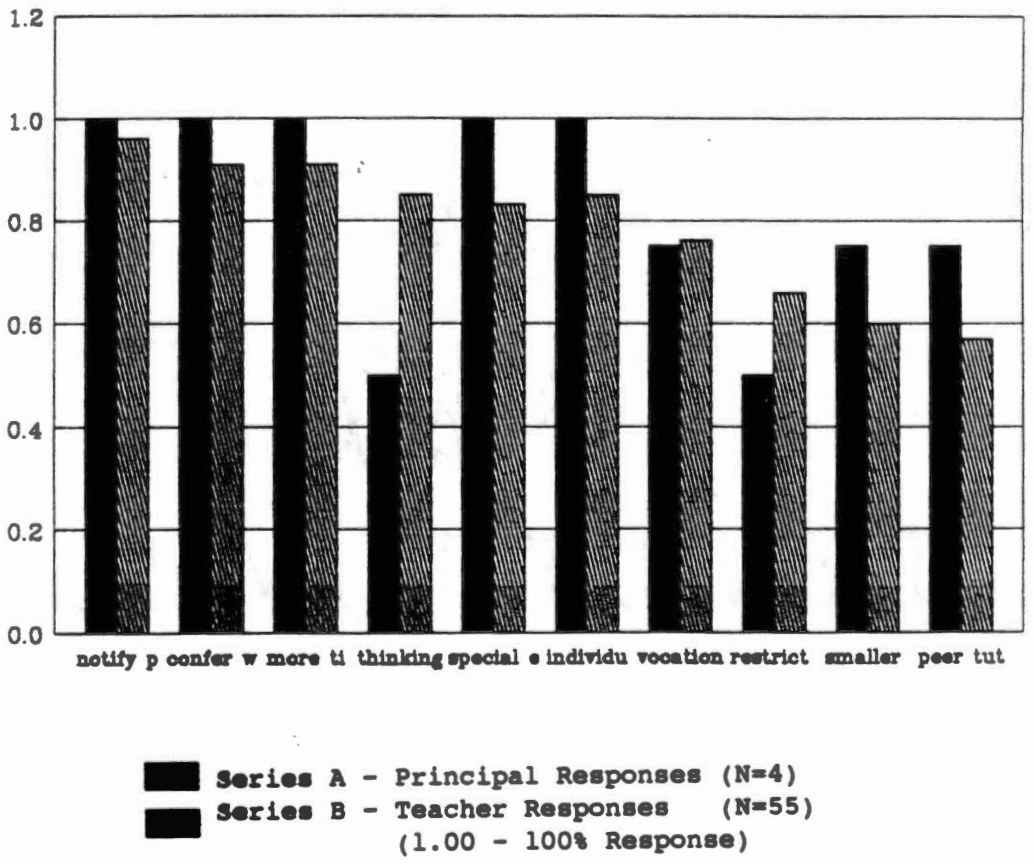

Figure 4. Percentage Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Responses to Strategies Used in Their Schools

As Tables IV, V, and VI show, differences in percentages between the two studies in the selected areas never exceeded 10 percent. During the evaluation of the remainder of the study, differences rarely exceeded 10 percent and when they did, they were not considered important unless these differences occurred at the extremes of the continuums.

TABLE IV

COMPARISON OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS RATINGS OF STUDENTS

Teachers Rating of Students		Below Average 1	2	3	Above Average 4	5
Attendance	Local	11	5	38	36	9
	National	5	12	34	35	14
Behavior	Local	5	11	47	25	11
	National	7	18	40	28	8
Completion of Assignments	Local	7	27	40	25	0
	National	11	25	39	20	4

(Local N=55, National N=9,652)

The two groups differed on the rating of their students on daily attendance. Where the national respondents tended to rate their students above average in attendance, the local teachers rated

them average or below with over 10 percent giving their students the lowest rating compared to the five percent of the national teachers. Fewer teachers on the local level felt very responsible for their students' attendance (13%) compared to 21 percent of the national group. Although the teachers did not vary much in the remaining two categories (Behavior and Completion of Assignments) they did differ on who was thought to be most responsible for classroom behavior; between teachers, students and parents, 51.6 percent of the local teachers placed most of the responsibility on the student compared to 40 percent of the national teachers.

TABLE V

COMPARISON OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY FOR		Not Very 1	2	3	A Great Deal 4
Student Attendance	Local	15	29	44	13
	National	19	26	33	21
Student Behavior	Local	0	22	38	40
	National	4	17	42	37
Student Completion of Assignments	Local	5	25	36	33
	National	9	22	38	30

(Local N=55, National N=9,652)

In Table VI the pattern of agreement continued. Local and national teachers were in general agreement about their perceptions regarding the amount of influence they had over their students' attendance, classroom behavior, and completion of assignments.

TABLE VI

COMPARISON OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER INFLUENCE

TEACHER INFLUENCE		Not Very 1	2	3	A Great Deal 4
Student Attendance	Local	29	36	27	7
	National	26	34	30	11
Student Behavior	Local	2	29	49	20
	National	5	24	47	24
Student Completion of Assignments	Local	13	31	35	22
	National	12	29	42	17

(Local N=55 National N=9,652)

When asked to rate the seriousness of certain problems, local teachers tended to rate attendance as a more serious problem than the national results indicated. Of particular interest was the perception of the range of academic diversity among students at their schools (See Appendix D, Question 9). Fifteen percent of the teachers responding to the national survey placed their students on

the high end of the variability scale from one to nine compared to only nine percent of the local teachers. Thirty-one percent of the local teachers instead rated their students on the low end of the scale, compared to 25 percent of the teachers nationwide.

Strategies

The responses regarding the strategies used with at-risk students and their effectiveness were remarkably similar (see Table VII).

TABLE VII

STRATEGY COMPARISONS
(Percent responding YES to regular use)

	Local	National
Notify Parents	96	95
Confer With Parent	91	94
More time on Basic Skills	91	84
Emphasize Thinking Skills	85	86
Individualizing Instruction	85	79
Special Education	83	73

Agreement about the negative consequences of telling a student to "leave at 16" (98% Local, 90% National), and eliminating art and music (92% Local, 94% National) was very strong. Probably the most significant agreement was in the perceptions of the effectiveness of

the strategies. Parents were regularly notified (95%) but less than 80 percent thought it was effective on the national scale while of the 96 percent of the local teachers who used it, only 64 percent thought it was effective. Of note is the fact that both studies' respondents thought that though they didn't use it as much, using vocational courses was perceived to be effective as a strategy to deal with at-risk students.

Two important differences did exist however. Only 50 percent of the national responders indicated that they regularly used vocational courses as a strategy compared to over 75 percent of the teachers in this local study. Where 60 percent of the teachers in the local study said they regularly used smaller classes, less than half (49%) of the teachers responding to the national study stated that their schools used smaller classes.

Comparison of Principals' Responses

School Climate

Again, because there was a small sample of principals, the strength of their responses is directly related to the strength given them by the teachers. Only items strengthened by teacher agreement were isolated for comparison.

As with the teachers, there was strong agreement on perceptions between the two groups of principals. Of particular note were the perceptions that arguments with teachers and fighting among students were not considered serious problems while completion of assignments

and attendance were. Additionally, use of drugs by students was considered somewhat of a serious problem by 56 percent of the national group while two of the four local principals agreed. All principals felt responsible for helping students cope with substance and alcohol abuse.

The principals in both the national and local studies agreed that strategies that they regularly used were notifying parents, conferring with parents, special education, vocational courses, special teachers, and individualizing instruction.

They also agreed that telling students to "leave at 16" and eliminating art and music were not regularly used because they were not considered effective. Again, though all the respondents regularly notified parents and conferred with them regarding their "at-risk" students, these strategies were not regarded as highly effective.

Half of the national group of principals used alternative schools while only one of the four local principals used an alternative school as a drop-out prevention strategy.

Findings Pertaining to the Holding Power Statistic

The Holding Power Statistic was calculated for each of the four high schools involved in this study. Each high school was assigned a letter for confidentiality and they were reported earlier under Statistical School Data. They were:

School	HPS
A	.78
B	.89
C	.81
D	.81

The range in Holding Power among the four schools was 11 percent. For the purpose of evaluating different schools, the two schools on either end of the H.P.S. range will be compared; School A (.78) with the least holding power and school B (.89) with the most.

Similarities Between the Two Schools

The following similarities were found between the two schools:

1. Less than 200 students in size;
2. Principals had been at the school 3-4 years;
3. Communities were considered moderately stable rather than mobile;
4. Percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunches (45%-55%).
5. Unanimous opinion of principals and teachers that attendance was the greatest at-risk factor in their schools;
6. General behavior of students was perceived to be average or better;
7. Students were confronted more with alcohol abuse outside the school than substance abuse or crime;

8. Teachers and principals rated students the same on attendance, completion of homework, and classroom discipline; and
9. The cut-off points used to identify at-risk students.

Differences

First, school B (.89) had suspended or expelled 9 percent of its students compared to none in school A (.78). In addition, while 14% of school B's students had failed one or more courses in the preceding year, five percent had failed one or more in school A, according to the principals' responses.

The principal of school B indicated that special programs were used as strategies and that he spent 21 to 30 percent of his time with at-risk problems. The principal of school A did not indicate any special programs and stated that he used less than 10 percent of his time with such students.

An interesting difference here is that while school B's principal used more time with the at-risk students, he thought it was <u>not very productive</u> time while the principal of school A thought his smaller amount of time was <u>somewhat productive.</u>

Teachers in school B tended to think that they had more influence over attendance, general behavior, and homework completion than the teachers in school A.

Specific differences were seen in the area of regularly used strategies and their relative effectiveness. The school with the highest holding power (B) tended to use smaller classes and

vocational courses as ways to meet the needs of at-risk students. Indeed, even though a smaller number of teachers in school A said their school used these strategies regularly, a larger percentage of the same respondents thought these would be effective if used.

Again, notifying parents was not rated effective compared to its use by either faculty but faculty members at school A had a lower amount of faith in parents. Only six of the 11 teachers (55%) in school A rated notifying parents as effective while 11 of the 14 teachers (79%) in school B rated the method effective.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major problem dealt with in this research study was the lack of local school data that would help identify factors in a student's life that might lead to the child being "at-risk," that is, having a tendency to fail at school or fail in life.

The purpose of the research was to determine the perceptions of principals and teachers about factors that contribute to a students decision to drop out of school and about what schools were doing to address those factors, both on a national level and on the local level, using four randomly selected Oklahoma high schools.

The methods used to gain the information were adopted from the same procedure used by Phi Delta Kappa researchers in the 1989 "Study of Students At-Risk." Questionnaires used by Phi Delta Kappa were used in the study to gain information from administration and teachers in the four high schools. The questionnaires were designed to measure perceptions about a student's school, family, peers, life events, and community that when tabulated, could be compared to other research findings about things that contribute to being at-risk.

Principal Findings and Discussion

This section will report consistencies in the local data

regarding teachers' perceptions of their students, the impact of economic realities, and factors contributing to holding power as well as providing a look at the interesting comparisons between the local and national data with regard to perceptions of educators and prevention strategies used in the schools.

Teachers and principals agreed that their students were not much different from other students locally or nationally in area of performance that would be related to school climate. Such areas of performance were attendance, classroom behavior, and completion of assignments. There were consistent perceptions of the rating of their students, the degree of responsibility they felt for their students, and the amount of influence they had over them. That is, when teachers rated their students high in a given area, they also felt a corresponding high degree of responsibility and amount of influence. As noted in Chapter II, absenteeism and disciplinary incidents are two areas of focus for determining the potential for a student to drop-out of school. The local teachers did not perceive serious shortcomings in either of these areas that might frustrate them and load to a poor climate in the classroom.

A finding from the local data that related to school climate was that the holding power of a school was directly proportional to the expectations of the staff. The school with the highest holding power had more suspensions and more students failing classes than the school with the least holding power. The members of the staff at the school with the highest holding power also felt that they had more influence over their students and had a comparatively higher

trust in parents than the staff at the school with the lowest holding power. Research has shown that drop-outs are having to deal with serious self-concept problems. By the time such students have arrived at age 16, there is a strong possibility that they will fulfill the only good they have known, failure, and quit school. When educators demonstrate that they expect such students to succeed in various school enterprises, the potential drop-out realizes that failing is not considered an alternative by everyone.

Local educators also face problems that are out of their control and must deal with these problems in a positive way. In the study, these problems related to the socio-economic background of their communities. Local principals reported that over 75 percent of the labor force in their communities was classified as skilled or unskilled labor or unemployed. As the literature has indicated, the ties between socio-economic status and self-concept are a reality. Professional educators in these schools seemed to deal with the resulting impact on parental priorities and student self-concepts by being realistic in their assessment of their students while providing an education for them in the most positive school atmosphere possible. They rated their students lower than the national figures in academic achievement but did not reveal, as implied in the previous paragraphs, any sense of extreme frustration with the students or the school.

Another specific finding in the study was that the four local schools were using strategies for drop-out prevention that were commonly being used across the nation, at least compared to the data

compiled in the Phi Delta Kappa study. Notification of parents, conferring with the parents, spending more time on basic skills, and individualizing instruction were common approaches of the school. These findings correlate with practices of successful programs already underway in the United States. Such programs emphasize coaching classes and computer assisted instruction in basic skills.

The data is also clear about what local and national educators perceive should not be done to an at-risk student. Telling a student to "leave at 16," retaining them in grade, eliminating art and music from their studies, giving extra homework, and placing them in the "low" group were all considered inappropriate responses both in practice and theory. The literature is divided on the effect of retaining students in grade but the results of this local study and the national Phi Delta Kappa study reveal that the educators agreed with those researchers who suggest avoidance of retention as a solution.

Perceptions of the local educators coincided with the national data except that the local data indicated lower rating of student attendance and academic achievement ability and more widespread use of vocational schools as an alternate strategy for dealing with at-risk students.

Another finding related to the process of local data collection itself. The teacher response rate was low for one school only. This school was not one of the two schools used in the comparison of Holding Power Statistics.

Major Conclusions

Readers have been able to gain insight into the firmness of the responses from the local participants by comparing them favorably to research findings on the national level and can now draw some conclusions about the perceptions of teachers and principals with regard to at-risk factors.

1. There were no distinctly unusual patterns in the school climates that might contribute to a student being at-risk.

Conclusions regarding school climate should not be drawn without an understanding of the interrelationships between perceptions about students, degrees of responsibility, and the amount of influence a teacher has.

It would be appropriate to suggest that each of these factors must be in healthy balance to have a positive environment. If the feeling of responsibility for a particular problem is high among teachers and they feel they have a high degree of influence, without good judgment, woe be to the poor student who simply is not academically capable of meeting those expectations. In fact, since students who dropout are generally two years behind their peers in reading abilty (Howard, 1972), teachers would have to exercise good judgment when dealing with these students in the classroom because the frustration on the part of the student in this environment might be at an all time high at the high school level where peer pressure can reach its peak and slow readers feel the eyes of their classmates on them in class performance situations. In similar fashion, teachers who feel very little responsibility for their

students and do not feel any influence over them will not feel comfortable in a school full of highly motivated, intelligent students. This study emphasizes the importance of these relationships.

A particular example was the issue of completion of assignments. Students were perceived as average or better in this area while teachers felt a high degree of responsibility. Taking into consideration that the teachers also felt that they had much influence over their students completion of assignments, the three areas were in balance and no reason for frustration existed, at least in this area of assignment completion. And as alluded to earlier, the less frustration that exists in a school, the better the chances of success for the at-risk student.

2. Educators in the local schools were working in potentially frustrating environments based on the principals' perceptions of socio-economic backgrounds of each community and education of parents is necessary to relieve the frustration potential.

The local educators in this study were working in schools representing communities having a labor force that did not have an emphasis on education. Less than 25 percent of the families represented by students in the schools were in professional or technical occupations. The remainder (over 75%) were in occupations classified as skilled and unskilled labor or were unemployed. This of course would have an effect on the expectations of most parents and probably an ill effect on teachers who came into their jobs with high academic expectations. Thus it seems that students who are at-

risk because of their family background would be more dependent on the teacher when setting educational goals since they would not receive support at home. More importantly, that teacher needs to be satisfied with the profession in order to provide the necessary leadership.

It is no wonder that teachers are skeptical (as they were in this local study) about the programs designed to upgrade the teaching ranks and standards when the facts, at least in the geographical area of this study, indicated a need to upgrade the expectations of the families. Therefore, one of the conclusions being made here is that there must be a continuing process to inform, probably on a massive scale, parents about the need for a quality education.

3. Local principals and teachers agreed on what is being done by their schools to combat "at-riskness."

As noted in Chapter Four, principals and teachers in the studied schools were in close agreement concerning strategies used in their buildings to help at-risk students.

The only source of disagreement was on the emphasis on thinking skills which can probably be related to the fact that principals are not always in a position to see what is happening on a daily/hourly basis in the classroom. In fact, all of the strategies used required direct involvment of the principal (notifying parents, basic skills classes, special education, etc.) except the emphasizing of thinking skills.

This gives a great deal of credibility to the fact that, at least in this study, teachers and administrators maintained a unified front in dealing with at-risk factors, thereby holding dissension and goal disagreement to a minimum.

Local educators were unknowningly reflecting their perceptions of the degree of community emphasis on education by their assessment of their students. Their responses to questions about their students indicated aspects of education that were unique to Oklahoma when compared to the national data.

4. The local information was in agreement with the national data with a few important exceptions. One of these exceptions was the rating of daily attendance. Local teachers rated their students lower in attendance. This perception is probably based on fact, although we do not have absence records to investigate, since we have already established that a weak foundation exists in the affected communities for high educational expectations. School, and therefore attendance at school, just isn't a priority.

Another exception to the rule was that teachers in the local study rated their students lower in academic ability than the national teachers who rated their students. Again we see an idiosyncracy that may be pertinent only to the area, the lack of support for developing academic standards. It would seem that teachers were indeed very accurate in their appraisal of students.

Differences between the two studies also existed among STRATEGIES. Over three-fourth's of the local teachers felt that their schools used vocational courses to help at-risk students,

compared to only half of the national group. We can conclude that the close proximity of the Central Area Vocational-Technical School and the emphasis in Oklahoma on vo-tech education contribute to this difference in perception/practice.

5. The local schools were fitting the common pattern of schools nationwide in the employment of certain strategies for coping with drop-outs.

Positive correlation of the local and national data revealed significant agreements in the area of strategies. For example, teachers and principals were in agreement about several things that are national in scope. Notifying and confering with parents, spending more time on basic skills, emphasizing thinking skills, individualizing instruction, and using special education were strategies commonly used. They even agreed that involving parents was not as effective as it should be.

6. The expectations of the staff of a school may have a lot to do with holding power in terms of student discipline and the amount of control that can be exercised over a student's school life. It was found that the more assertive the discipline and the higher degree of control felt by the teacher, the greater the holding power.

The expectations of the staff play a tremendous role in keeping students in school. Clear communication about what is expected from students in terms of behavior and the desire/ability to follow through in an assertive fashion were factors that existed in the school with the highest holding power in this study. This school

had the highest suspension rate and the highest academic failure rate of all local schools.

At the same time, this same school used special programs to help at-risk students and its teachers felt that they had more input concerning students daily decisions. It seems that this school was able to balance the needs of the general student population with the needs of the individual.

Perhaps more noticeable than all other responses was the response of the principal of the school with the highest holding power related to the time he spent with at-risk students. Even though he spent 25-30 percent of his time with potential drop-outs, he viewed the time spent as not very productive. The importance of this should not be taken lightly. His standards/ expectations were so high that, although his school was able to retain more students than the others, the results were still not satisfactory to him.

Since the administrator of the school with the least holding power spent less time and thought it productive, we might conclude that it is better to be somewhat disappointed in this daily challenge to help at-risk students than to be under a mistaken impression that all is well while students are leaving our schools.

Recommendations for Practice

Excessive absenteeism was an important issue, not so much because the teachers thought their students were bad in this area but because of a separate underlying issue. The teachers believed that they did not have as much influence as the parents in the area

of attendance. It will be remembered that teachers and principals had serious doubts about the effectiveness of dealing with parents. If this idea undermines the trust of the school in the ability of parents to deal with their childs absenteeism, this can create a climate of frustration in school. This in turn can result in an environment where decisions are made from an emotional perspective, an unhealthy situation at best for at-risk students. In the absence of leadership in the home, someone else MUST step forward.

1. Administrators should deal with the issues of excessive absenteeism in a way which will bring accountability from students AND parents. Confrontation of absenteeism with parents without a support system, school board inclusive, would be unsuccessful in the end.

Taking a "hard-line" approach can not be the sole strategy employed by the school. Making a school a safe and stable place must accompagny higher expectations, lest students are driven off without a chance to really enjoy getting an education.

Failing students academically is another focal point, albeit somewhat controversial. Teachers in the study failed students but at the same time denounced retention in grade as a way of dealing with at-risk students. This may be more of a comment on the system of grading than on anything else. Teachers have not had much else to use as a way to communicate to students that they are not performing up to expectations.

2. The response to this dilemma and certainly one that is being used in several states should be the adoption of a non-graded

or outcome based education system. Such a system can remove the failure stigma while providing students with standards. Although not a "cure-all", students placed in such an environment would have one less school imposed sanction to dismantle their self-concept.

Phi Delta Kappa researchers established 45 factors leading to "at-riskness" in their study (Table VIII) and assumed that a student was at-risk if he/she displayed six or more of the factors. It should be noted that while absenteeism, academic failure, low income background, and suspension/expelsion from school were listed among the 45, the existence of one or two of these factors does not necessarily create a failure oriented environment for a student. In fact, in this study the school with the highest Holding Power Statistic also had the highest percentage of suspensions.

3. More research should be done on the relationship between expectations and holding power, as the information gained from the local data (HPS) implies that setting standards of behavior and academic progress and following through assertively can actually contribute to a schools ability to hold its students. From an economic/psychological perspective, it resembles the concept that the quality/desirability of an object goes up (improves) when it is denied, especially to an adolescent. Fortunately, the debate here is more about the extent of other factors of "at-riskness" since the need for suspensions as part of school discipline is a reality.

4. Education is needed to help raise lower expectations that may result from a low socio-economic base. Low income background was a common factor in all four schools of this study as well as the Phi

TABLE VIII

PHI DELTA KAPPA RESEARCH ESTIMATES OF WHAT MAKES A CHILD AT-RISK

Index	Item
1	Attempted suicide during the past year
2	Used drugs or engaged in substance abuse
3	Has been a drug "pusher" during the past year
4	Student's sense of self esteem is negative
5	Was involved in a pregnancy during past year
6	Was expelled from school during the past year
7	Consumes alcohol regularly
8	Was arrested for illegal activity
9	Parents have negative attitudes toward education
10	Has several brothers or sisters who dropped out
11	Was sexually or physically abused last year
12	Failed two courses last school year
13	Was suspended from school twice last year
14	Student was absent more than 20 days last year
15	Parent drinks excessively an is an alcoholic
16	Was retained in grade (i.e., "held back")
17	One parent attempted suicide last year
18	Scored below 20th %ile on standardized test
19	Other family members used drugs during past year
20	Attended three or more schools during past five years
21	Average grades were below "C" last school year
23	Has an IQ score below 90
24	Parents divorced or separated last year
25	Father is unskilled laborer who is unemployed
26	Father or mother died during the past year
27	Diagnosed as being in Special Education
28	English is not language used most often in home
29	Mother is unskilled laborer who is unemployed
30	Lives in an inner city, urban area
31	The mother is only parent living in the home
32	Is year older than other students in same grade
33	Mother did not graduate from high school
34	Father lost his job during the past year
35	Was dropped from athletic team during past year
36	Experienced a serious illness or accident
37	Does not participate in extracurricular activities
38	Parent had major change in health status
39	Had a close friend who died during past year
40	Had a brother or sister die during past year
41	Father did not graduate from high school
42	Changed schools during the year
43	Changed place of residence during the past year
44	Has three or more brothers and sisters
45	Is the youngest child in the family

Delta Kappa study results. According to the PDK research, the average national Holding Power Statistic was .81 and many of the 45 at-risk factors related to a low income environment. Locally, the average HPS was .818 and nearly half of the students received free/reduced price lunches.

This is a problem that does not have a short-term solution, other than an emphasis on caring and nurturing for students who fall into this unfortunate situation. In the long-term however, the key to overcoming this is simple. It must be education. Currently, the state of Oklahoma is at a crossroad. Will there be committment toward progress? The answer to this question will lead to the answers to the drop-out problem.

5. Tracking of some kind is necessary. The subject of "tracking" students has been debated feverishly over the years. Proponents suggest that such practice allows teachers the ability to move faster for those students who are capable while maintaining a slower pace for those who are not. Opponents point out that this system of organizing by ability level leads to "labeling" students and a chance that some students will not receive the same quality education as others.

The research suggests that students who are at-risk need special help. In fact, they might some day be classified as "handicapped." Schools then must face the prospect of another distinction/category in their educational environment that, although there is no policy/state law to address it now, should be accommodated.

The lack of desire to face the problem of the at-risk student, especially in the elementary years, merely contributes to it. In fact, there is a vicious spiral of factors at work in this regard. Schools don't identify potential drop-outs at a young age because they are either afraid to "track" or simply don't want the extra burden. As the at-risk student gets older, basic skills lag farther and farther behind and self concept decreases. School officials become more frustrated and, lacking the statutory or theoretical support for effective identification and treatment of at-risk students, are not inclined to deal with them. The student is left to struggle through the remaining years of education that he/she has until graduation or the magical age (to them) of 16 when they don't have to go to school anymore and the school is happy to oblige them.

In practice, then, educators need to start the identification process early as they would a handicapped child and place the identified student in the "least restrictive environment." Financial commitment must be made for this "tracking" system. Smaller classes, emphasis on basic skills, and guidance of parents are critical at the elementary level. Students whose self-concepts are given a chance early will not be likely to need "tracking" later in school.

It would also be practical for a unified effort to be made to address the at-risk student as "handicapped" in some way at a legislative level with resulting statutory grounds for school action and funding.

6. Educators must let their actions speak louder than their words. Administrators and teachers "say" that they do not tell an at-risk student to "leave at 16." However, care must be taken to evaluate the curriculum and at-risk identification procedures to make sure that an opposite signal is not being sent in practice. If educators say that they do not want anyone to leave school at age 16 but do not identify or intervene with such students when it is in their power to do so, they are, in practice, making it fruitless for those students to continue.

Recommendations for Research

1. The role of academics must be studied. One factors not researched in this study or the Phi Delta Kappa Study of Students At-Risk was the standard of academic achievement exemplified by the schools involved. A school with a very high holding power may be able to keep all of its students because all students are able to meet their very low standards of behavior and academic expectations. But it would certainly be another matter if a high holding power corresponded with excellent performance by students on standardized tests and college entrance examinations.

In this regard, discipline and self-concept are related and more research should be done to find out not only what schools are doing to keep their students but to find out for what purpose they are being kept. It would also be important to find out if teachers in these studies felt that their academic standards had to be lowered, willingly or not.

2. School climate factors need study and a theoretical base. Until this research study, this writer had not thought much about the precarious balance between factors in a school climate. An investigation into the different factors that contribute to a positive school climate along with the development of a general theory about its relation to keeping students in school would be a significant help to the education profession.

3. Discipline policies and their implementation should be studied. An additional recommendation would be that each school across the nation that took part in the Phi Delta Kappa study be asked to submit additional information about their approach to discipline to discover if there is any rhyme or reason to the school's organization. As this study shows, assertive discipline might be a key factor in providing a safe environment for all students to feel at home.

4. Alternatives to the typical structured school should be explored. Alternative schools were not in use in the local study. Perhaps this is a result of the heavy reliance on vocational-technical schools but by doing so, the vo-tech system becomes laden with the problem of teaching basic skills, a job which really belongs to the public schools. Can financial committment be made by the state (people) of Oklahoma toward the development of programs that are positive in nature and that will help to meet the educational and self-concept needs of the at-risk student?

In a 1985 treatise, Harold Hodgkinson makes two observations about dealing with drop-outs. On the subject of what strategies

were needed, he suggested the need for "identifying and intervening (emphasis added) earlier in the education of potential drop-outs" (p. 12). On the subject of excellent drop-out prevention programs, he describes that "particularly useful are the programs which combine intensive, individualized training in the basic skills with work-related projects" (p. 12).

With regard to early involvement, the results of this study indicate a lack of faith in parents, at least at the high school level. Logically, a problem like this can best be attacked before such attitudes begin to develop; that is, as early as possible in a child's education. "Parent education" programs should be developed for parents of elementary children, especially those who exhibit at-risk tendencies.

There is however another problem that must be confronted. It is not enough to merely identify the at-risk student at a younger age. Unfortunately, the tendency is to believe (hope) that the familial-social role of the elementary teacher or counselor will be enough to allow the maladjusted child to "get through."

According to this research study, some of the ways believed to be most effective (and practiced by many) are individualizing instruction (vs. parenting) and using smaller classes and special teachers. These strategies, unfortunate as this may be for struggling school districts, cost money and will call for financial commitment.

This researcher would also agree with Mr. Hodgkinson's second observation about the need for vocational programs. Aside from the

probability that some students who enroll in vocational programs do so to avoid the embarrassment and resulting negative self-concept of trying to succeed at college-preparatory courses, students who take advantage of this opportunity are becoming part of a well financed practical approach to occupational preparation. The capability of vocational-technical schools to provide hands-on individualized instruction creates an important opportunity for at-risk students to have their needs met.

But there does seem to be a "fly in the ointment" in this regard. Whether partly because of the need to adapt to the technological expectations of society or just to take the approach of "it is not our responsibility," vocational schools have gradually taken a path that leads to higher admission standards, creating a more serious problem for the potential drop-out. Such a path, which is characterized by academic requirements that a potential drop-out can not possibly meet (such as algebra and minimum GPA's), not only decreases the potential enrollment base for vo-tech schools but certainly is "a path that leadeth to destruction" for the at-risk student. A recommendation that can be made here is that while the standards increase for admission, new programs that meet the needs of the potential drop-out should be provided.

Probably the most important suggestion that can be made in this light is that schools of all kinds will need to look at adapting their curriculum to accommodate the need for more hands-on, personal experiences for all students at the earliest possible age.

Summary

In conclusion, some of the evidence suggests that there is a frustration building in the public schools, caused by a perception of educators that many of the factors contributing to "at-riskness" can not be effectively dealt with by themselves and in many cases, educators believe that they are the only ones who want to do anything about those factors.

It is hoped that as the information from this research study and future research projects becomes available and more committment is made by parents and local/federal governmental bodies, that our education system will see a "renaissance" when children of all ages and capabilities will be able to earn high school graduation diplomas with their dignity and self-respect intact.

Now What?

Keeping the potential drop-outs in school is not an easy task. Not only are they unwilling to cooperate with school officials but they are also generally hostile both to the school and their own parents. This hostility often underlies the discipline problems that surface with these students and administrators are more than relieved to have one less problem on their hands. Parents generally acknowledge that "there is nothing we can do anymore." As a result the student who has endured years of frustration because his/her needs were largely ignored, or ineptly identified, finds himself/herself on the street at a potentially high cost to society.

We as educators can intervene in this situation by re-committing ourselves to "kids", not the organization. After all, without the "kids", there would be no organization.

Another way to improve our strategy for keeping children in school is by becoming leaders in a management oriented society. Managers take what exists and work to keep it going. Leaders distinguished themselves from managers by taking more initiative, creating structures and then component parts, and essentially are not afraid to go where no one has gone before. Drop-out prevention programs can be initiated early without waiting for researchers to prove what is successful or politicians to legislate what they think is appropriate. New programs call for people who are willing to take risks.

But in the midst of this cauldron of pressure to respond to the needs of society and the frustration of actually working with at-risk students, we must not forget that most important ingredient that many of these children are needing, the love and respect that all individuals deserve.

This study has taught us that students who are at-risk can be identified, if not through their own habits, then through the assessments of the educators in their schools. Since we know that we can identify the problem, there is more hope for the future of all of our children.

People who have already dropped out do not need to feel left out. Strategies should be employed with them as they are in the public schools with students who are at-risk. Community education

programs can help meet the needs of this segment of the population. The important thing that this researcher has gained from the study is the feeling that negative self-concept is at the root of the problem.

Children and adults are not immune to occasional bouts with self-doubt. In most situations however, peer groups and individuals serve as constant reminders about what we can be because we have already established a specific identify. That is, we know who we are, if for no other reason, based on the expectations of those around us. As I reflect on this study, I am reminded of my opening remarks in the preface where I refer to children being "made in the likeness of God." I believe that the majority of self-concept problems, and therefore many at-risk factors, are a result of disregarding out "roots" in the spiritual nature of man and how, being "God like", children are so special, each with a specific purpose in life. When we accept this, families in our society, no matter what their income, will be able to raise children with positive self-concepts and no doubt have a tremendous effect on the drop-out phenomena.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURE AS PART OF PHI DELTA KAPPA STUDY

Job 1: Form a Research Committee

Each chapter participating in the Phi Delta Kappa Study of Students At Risk will accomplish thirteen big jobs between August 1, 1988, and June 1, 1989:

1. form a research committee
2. select three schools in the chapter's area
3. prepare (Kansas City training and local training)
4. interview the principal of each school
5. survey the teachers in each school
6. apply "Holding Power Statistic" in the high school
7. write a narrative report about each school
8. collect information about students in each school
9. do a case study of one student
10. do at least one optional project
11. (perhaps) do further analyses of data
12. discuss the data at a district-level meeting
13. disseminate research results

Jobs 1 and 2 must be accomplished before October 1st. Jobs 3 through 8 must be completed before December 1, 1988. Jobs 9 and 10 must be finished before February 1, 1989. Jobs 11 and 12 must be accomplished before June 1, 1989. Job 13 must be worked on before and after March, 1989.

To participate in this study, you must form a research committee of local Kappans who are committed to this project and who will help you do the jobs that need to be done. The instructions in this document pertain only to Job 1: Form a Research Committee. To form a committee, you must accomplish five tasks:

1. review the jobs that will need to be done
2. consider the experiences and skills required
3. identify people who have the experiences and skills
4. invite those people to participate
5. secure a commitment from them to complete the study

Each of these five tasks is described below.

Task 1, Review the Jobs That Need To Be Done: In the outline above, thirteen jobs are listed that need to be done by each chapter that participates in this project. You will receive a complete "Manual of Instructions" about September 1st that describes each of the thirteen jobs in detail, including the tasks required to do each job. However, because the exact nature of the jobs to be done will affect who might be most helpful to you on the committee, and because you need to form a research committee and select three schools (i.e., the first

APPENDIX B

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF PARTICIPATING PHI DELTA KAPPA CHAPTERS

Legend

• Chapters

APPENDIX C

PRNCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of District _____

Name of School _____

Street _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Name of Principal _____

Telephone _____

2. School Level ___ Elementary ___ Middle ___ Senior

Record the total enrollment for this school district and this school as of October 1 for each of the following years (be exact):

	District	School
1980	3._____	12._____
1981	4._____	13._____
1982	5._____	14._____
1983	6._____	15._____
1984	7._____	16._____
1985	8._____	17._____
1986	9._____	18._____
1987	10._____	19._____
1988	11._____	20._____

30. Socioeconomic background of students' families in this school (total 100%)

Professionals	Mgrs, Tech.	Skilled Labor	Unskill Labor	Unemployed
____%	____%	____%	____%	____%

31. Describe the stability of this community (i.e., people moving in/out)

Very Stable	Moderately Stable	Moderately Mobile	Very Mobile
____	____	____	____

32. Circle if the school is: Public Parochial Independent

33. What percentage of students receive free or reduced lunch or breakfast? _____%

34. How many students were <u>suspended</u> last year? _____

35. How many students were <u>expelled</u> last year? _____

36. Estimate percentage of students who <u>failed</u> one or more courses last year? _____%

37. (Elementary only) How many students were <u>retained in grade</u> last year at each grade level?

K _____

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

Estimate the degree to which each of the following is a problem among the students in your school:

		Not a Serious Problem	Somewhat Serious Problem	Very Serious Problem
38.	Attendance	_____	_____	_____
39.	Attitude Toward School	_____	_____	_____
40.	Completing Assignments	_____	_____	_____
41.	Arguments with Teachers	_____	_____	_____
42.	Fighting Among Students	_____	_____	_____
43.	Assault of Teachers	_____	_____	_____
44.	Use of Drugs by Students	_____	_____	_____
45.	Selling of drugs	_____	_____	_____
46.	Alcohol Use by Students	_____	_____	_____
47.	Sexual Activity/Students	_____	_____	_____
48.	Pregnancy Among Girls	_____	_____	_____
49.	Abused Children	_____	_____	_____
50.	Theft	_____	_____	_____
51.	Racial Conflict	_____	_____	_____
52.	Classroom Discipline	_____	_____	_____
53.	School Morale	_____	_____	_____

During the last few years, many states and school districts have taken steps to improve the quality of education for young people in schools. Sometimes these actions have been taken by state legislatures, sometimes by state boards of education, sometimes by state departments of education, and sometimes by local boards of education and superintendents.

The intent of these actions by states and local boards has been to make schools better. Would you respond to the changes that have occurred in three ways?

1. Did this change occur in your situation?
2. How do teachers feel about these changes?
3. How have the changes affected students?

		Did This Occur?		How Teachers Feel			Effect on Students		
54.	Increase requirements for graduation?	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
55.	Increase requirements for teacher evaluation	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
56.	Mandatory testing programs for students	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
57.	Mandatory testing programs for teachers	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
58.	Retain in grade those who do not achieve up to the "norm"	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
59.	Restrict participation in extracurricular activities for those who do not achieve	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
60.	More teacher involvement in decision-making	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
61.	More school-site autonomy	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-
62.	Improve working conditions for teachers	Yes	No	+	0	-	+	0	-

Suppose we posit a number line as portraying the absence or presence of a factor (1 = low, 9 = high)

Low High

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Suppose further that the following options reflect the degree of diversity present within your school on various factors:

A. 1 - 9 (full range of variability)
B. 1 - 5 (low end of scale, predominately)
C. 5 - 9 (high end of scale, predominately)
D. 3 - 7 (middle range, predominately)

Given the rationale above, how would you describe the range or diversity among your students on each of the following:

63. intelligence	A	B	C	D
64. motivation	A	B	C	D
65. experience (trips, etc.)	A	B	C	D
66. academic achievement	A	B	C	D

67. Which of the following options represents how you think teachers in this school ought to provide instruction?

____ each teacher should decide what to do with his or her students

____ there should be a common program, but each teacher should be encouraged to make variations for individual students

____ there should be a different but standard strategy for different types of students

____ there should be a common program that each teacher is expected to follow

Teachers and administrators generally have a "cut off" point in their minds that triggers attention to students who may be at risk. Presented below are three different factors that schools use to alert themselves to problems among their students: absences, grades, and achievement scores. Where does your school "draw the line" regarding these things? Circle the "cut-off" point for each factor.

68. Absences	69. Grades Received	70. Below Grade Level Achievement Scores
A. 1-3	A. all C's or below	A. slightly
B. 4-6	B. one D or F	B. one year
C. 7-9	C. mostly D's and F's	C. 1 to 1 1/2 years
D. 10+	D. several F's	D. 2 or more years

Some students are "at risk." Being "at risk" means being likely to fail at school or even at life. When you have students who are at risk, which of the following strategies do you regularly use? Also indicate how effective each strategy is, using the four-point scale below. Rate the effectiveness of every strategy, even if you do not use it regularly.

	Do You Do This Regularly?		How Effective Is It?			
			Not Very			Very
	Yes	No	1	2	3	4
71. smaller classes	___	___	___	___	___	___
72. computerized instruction	___	___	___	___	___	___
73. special teachers	___	___	___	___	___	___
74. peer tutoring	___	___	___	___	___	___
75. retain in grade	___	___	___	___	___	___
76. special education	___	___	___	___	___	___
77. vocational courses	___	___	___	___	___	___
78. alternative school	___	___	___	___	___	___
79. special study skills	___	___	___	___	___	___
80. special textbooks	___	___	___	___	___	___
81. place in low group	___	___	___	___	___	___
82. coping skills	___	___	___	___	___	___
83. flexible scheduling	___	___	___	___	___	___
84. individualize instruction	___	___	___	___	___	___
85. home tutoring	___	___	___	___	___	___
86. assign extra homework	___	___	___	___	___	___
87. thinking skills	___	___	___	___	___	___
88. restrict from sports	___	___	___	___	___	___
89. refer to psychologist	___	___	___	___	___	___
90. refer to social worker	___	___	___	___	___	___
91. confer with parents	___	___	___	___	___	___
92. more time on basic skills	___	___	___	___	___	___
93. eliminate art and music	___	___	___	___	___	___
94. notify parents	___	___	___	___	___	___
95. Chapter I program	___	___	___	___	___	___
96. teacher aides	___	___	___	___	___	___
97. say "leave at age 16"	___	___	___	___	___	___
98. before school programs	___	___	___	___	___	___
99. after school programs	___	___	___	___	___	___
100. summer school program	___	___	___	___	___	___
101. other (specify)	___	___	___	___	___	___

102. What percentage of your working time do you spend on the problems associated with students who are at risk?

____ less than 10 percent

____ 11 to 20 percent

____ 21 to 30 percent

____ 31 to 40 percent

____ 41 to 50 percent

____ more than 50 percent

103. Is the time that you spend working with at risk students

____ very productive

____ somewhat productive

____ not very productive

____ not productive at all

How much influence does your school have over students':

	Not Very Much			Great Deal
	1	2	3	4
104. reading comprehension	1	2	3	4
105. mathematics skills	1	2	3	4
106. writing skills	1	2	3	4
107. listening skills	1	2	3	4
108. daily attendance	1	2	3	4
109. general behavior in school	1	2	3	4
110. attitude toward school	1	2	3	4
111. completion of homework	1	2	3	4
112. attention in class	1	2	3	4
113. higher order thinking skills	1	2	3	4

Please rank order the extent to which each of the groups listed (parents, teachers, and students) should be responsible for helping students acquire the learning or behavior specified.

1 = most responsible
2 = next most responsible
3 = least responsible

	Parents	Teachers	Students
114. reading comprehension	___	___	___
115. mathematics skills	___	___	___
116. writing skills	___	___	___
117. listening skills	___	___	___
118. daily attendance	___	___	___
119. general behavior in school	___	___	___
120. attitude toward school	___	___	___
121. completion of homework	___	___	___
122. attention in class	___	___	___
123. higher order thinking skills	___	___	___

Below is a list of problems that students may be confronted with outside of school. Are your students confronted more or confronted less with the problems listed below than students at most other schools?

	Less				More
	1	2	3	4	5
124. substance abuse	1	2	3	4	5
125. family discord	1	2	3	4	5
126. family instability	1	2	3	4	5
127. crime	1	2	3	4	5
128. alcohol abuse	1	2	3	4	5

Is it possible for you to help your students cope with these problems?

	Definitely No			Definitely Yes
	1	2	3	4
129. substance abuse	1	2	3	4
130. family discord	1	2	3	4
131. family instability	1	2	3	4
132. crime	1	2	3	4
133. alcohol abuse	1	2	3	4

How responsible do you feel for helping students cope with these problems?

	Not At All			Very
	1	2	3	4
134. substance abuse	1	2	3	4
135. family discord	1	2	3	4
136. family instability	1	2	3	4
137. crime	1	2	3	4
138. alcohol abuse	1	2	3	4

Rank order the extent to which each of the groups listed (parents, teachers, and students) should be responsible for helping students cope with these problems.

1 = most responsible
2 = next most responsible
3 = least responsible

	Parents	Teachers	Students
139. substance abuse	___	___	___
140. family discord	___	___	___
141. family instability	___	___	___
142. crime	___	___	___
143. alcohol abuse	___	___	___

All levels

144. What is your primary role as principal of this school?

145. Is there a special incentive in your district or in your school to work with students who are most at risk?

146. What is the nature of that incentive?

147. Does the incentive work?

148. What is your perception of how teachers feel about working with at risk students?

149. What is the process used to provide at risk students the needed help to address their "at risk" characteristic? Please address academic and non-academic characteristics.

150. As principal, what role do you play in addressing at risk students' needs?

151. What at risk characteristic is most often associated with your at risk students?

152. Does the district have a formal plan and written policies for dealing with students who are at risk? If "yes," what is that plan?

Secondary

153. Describe the way students are assigned to classes in your school.

154. Are at risk students automatically assigned to certain classes? If so, what are they?

155. What kind of classes are at risk students assigned to?

A. regular
B. remedial
C. basic skills

156. How do you feel about compulsory education?

Elementary

157. How are the composition of the classes formed each year in your school? (Probe) What process do you use to assign students to classes and teachers each year?

158. Does the class formation process take into account whether or not a student is at risk? If so, how?

159. What is the most important academic skill students must acquire for school success?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER SURVEY

The basic purpose of this portion of the study is to determine teachers' perceptions regarding students who may be at risk. A student is felt to be at risk if that student is in danger of failing in school or failing in life.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on the answer blank, and do not use a pen. Use a No. 2 pencil. Please answer every question carefully. Fill the appropriate circles on the answer blank completely. The questionnaire is fairly long, but it is easy to respond to.

Now, turn your answer blank so that the words, "Teacher Survey", are positioned in the upper left-hand corner of the page, with places for responses to items 1 through 100 on the right side of the page.

Go on to the next page.

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Teacher Survey

Directions

Read the instructions in the Teacher Survey booklet, then mark the appropriate circles with a No 2 pencil

Correct Mark ○ ○ ● ○

Incorrect Marks ⊗ ◐ ⊙ ◕

What subjects are you currently teaching? (mark all that apply)

- ○ LANGUAGE ARTS
- ○ MATHEMATICS
- ○ SCIENCE
- ○ SOCIAL STUDIES
- ○ ART
- ○ MUSIC
- ○ PHYSICAL EDUCATION
- ○ FOREIGN LANGUAGE
- ○ VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
- ○ OTHER

Are you certified in all of these areas?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO

PDK | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K

SEX
- ○ MALE
- ○ FEMALE

GRADE OR EDUCATION
K 7
1 8
2 9
3 10
4 11
5 12
6

A STUDY OF STUDENTS AT RISK

1 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	11 ① ② ③ ④	21 ① ② ③ ④	31 ① ② ③	41 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	12 ① ② ③ ④	22 ① ② ③ ④	32 ① ② ③	42 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	13 ① ② ③ ④	23 ① ② ③ ④	33 ① ② ③	43 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	14 ① ② ③ ④	24 ① ② ③ ④	34 ① ② ③	44 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	15 ① ② ③ ④	25 ① ② ③ ④	35 ① ② ③	45 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	16 ① ② ③ ④	26 ① ② ③ ④	36 ① ② ③	46 ① ② ③ ④
7 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	17 ① ② ③ ④	27 ① ② ③ ④	37 ① ② ③	47 ① ② ③ ④
8 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	18 ① ② ③ ④	28 ① ② ③ ④	38 ① ② ③	48 ① ② ③ ④
9 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	19 ① ② ③ ④	29 ① ② ③ ④	39 ① ② ③	49 ① ② ③ ④
10 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤	20 ① ② ③ ④	30 ① ② ③ ④	40 ① ② ③	50 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

51 ① ② ③ ④	61 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	71 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	81 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	91 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
52 ① ② ③ ④	62 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	72 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	82 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	92 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
53 ① ② ③ ④	63 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	73 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	83 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	93 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
54 ① ② ③ ④	64 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	74 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	84 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	94 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
55 ① ② ③ ④	65 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	75 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	85 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	95 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
56 ① ② ③	66 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	76 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	86 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	96 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
57 ① ② ③	67 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	77 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	87 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	97 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
58 ① ② ③	68 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	78 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	88 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	98 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
59 ① ② ③	69 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	79 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	89 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	99 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ
60 ① ② ③	70 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	80 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	90 Ⓨ Ⓝ	Ⓨ Ⓝ	100 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

Subjects: On the left-hand portion of the page, below the directions, is this question: "What subjects are you currently teaching?" Mark all that apply. Also answer the question about certification.

Note: In the lower left-hand corner of the answer blank you will see a series of vertical columns marked "PDK" and then "A" through "K". Mark the columns as follows:

PDK: Mark the four circles that represent the Phi Delta Kappa chapter number that will be given to you by the person who distributes the "Teacher Survey" forms. This will be a four-digit number.

A. Age: Indicate your age

B. School Level:

1 = Elementary
2 = Middle or Junior High
3 = Senior High

C. Total Years of Teaching Experience

D. Years at This School

E. Ethnic Group to Which You Belong:

1 = Asian
2 = Black
3 = Hispanic
4 = White
5 = Other

F. Average Size of Your Classes:

1 = less than 15
2 = 16 to 20
3 = 21 to 25
4 = 26 to 30
5 = 31 to 35
6 = 36 or more

Go on to the next page

G. Highest degree You Hold:

0 = No degree
1 = Bachelors
2 = Masters
3 = Masters + 15 semester hours
4 = Doctors

H. Proportion of Working Time You Spend With At Risk Students:

0 = less than 10 percent
1 = 11 to 20 percent
2 = 21 to 30 percent
3 = 31 to 40 percent
4 = 41 to 50 percent
5 = more than 50 percent

I. How Productive Are Your Efforts With At Risk Students?

0 = not productive at all
1 = not very productive
2 = so-so/in between
3 = fairly productive
4 = very productive

J. How Many Students Failed Your Course Last Year?

0 = none
1 = less than 10 percent
2 = 11 to 25 percent
3 = 26 to 50 percent
4 = more than 50 percent

K. How Many of Your Students Failed One or More Courses Last Year?

0 = none
1 = less than 10 percent
2 = 11 to 25 percent
3 = 26 to 50 percent
4 = more than 50 percent

Sex: Mark "M" if you are male or "F" if you are female.

Grade or Education: Mark each grade level that you are currently teaching.

Go on to the next page

Answer the remaining questions by marking your answer blank in the appropriate place for each numbered item on the right hand side of the page, 1 through 100.

Compared to students in general, rate the students you teach on the following factors, according to the scale below:

Below Average				Above Average
1	2	3	4	5

1. reading comprehension
2. mathematics skills
3. writing skills
4. listening skills
5. daily attendance
6. general behavior in school
7. attitude toward school
8. completion of homework
9. attention in class
10. higher order thinking skills

How responsible do you feel for specific learnings or behaviors of the students you teach?

Not Very			Very
1	2	3	4

11. reading comprehension
12. mathematics skills
13. writing skills
14. listening skills
15. daily attendance
16. general behavior in school
17. attitude toward school
18. completion of homework
19. attention in class
20. higher order thinking skills

Go on to the next page

How much influence do you have over students':

	Not Very Much			Great Deal
	1	2	3	4

21. reading comprehension
22. mathematics skills
23. writing skills
24. listening skills
25. daily attendance
26. general behavior in school
27. attitude toward school
28. completion of homework
29. attention in class
30. higher order thinking skills

Please indicate which of the groups listed (parents, teachers, or students) should be most responsible for helping students acquire the learning or behavior specified, according to the following key:

1 = parents
2 = teachers
3 = students

31. reading comprehension
32. mathematics skills
33. writing skills
34. listening skills
35. daily attendance
36. general behavior in school
37. attitude toward school
38. completion of homework
39. attention in class
40. higher order thinking skills

Go on to the next page

Below is a list of problems that students may be confronted with outside of school. In terms of the problems listed below, are your students confronted less or confronted more than students at most other schools? Use the following scale:

Less				More
1	2	3	4	5

41. substance abuse
42. family discord
43. family instability
44. crime
45. alcohol abuse

Is it possible for you to help your students cope with these problems?

Definitely No			Definitely Yes
1	2	3	4

46. substance abuse
47. family discord
48. family instability
49. crime
50. alcohol abuse

How responsible do you feel for helping students cope with these problems?

Not At All			Very
1	2	3	4

51. substance abuse
52. family discord
53. family instability
54. crime
55. alcohol abuse

Go on to the next page

Please indicate which of the groups listed (parents, teachers, or students) should be most responsible for helping students cope with the problems specified, according to the following key:

1 = parents
2 = teachers
3 = students

56. substance abuse
57. family discord
58. family instability
59. crime
60. alcohol abuse

Some students are "at risk." Being "at risk" means being likely to fail at school or even at life. When you have students who are at risk, which of the following strategies do you regularly use? Also indicate how effective each strategy is, using the four-point scale below. Rate the effectiveness of every strategy, even if you do not use it regularly.

	Do You Do This Regularly?		Is It Effective?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
61. smaller classes				
62. computerized instruction				
63. special teachers				
64. peer tutoring				
65. retain in grade				
66. special education				
67. vocational courses				
68. alternative school				
69. special study skills				
70. special textbooks				
71. place in low group				
72. emphasize coping skills				
73. flexible scheduling				
74. individualize instruction				
75. home tutoring				
76. extra homework				
77. emphasize thinking skills				
78. restrict from sports				
79. refer to psychologist				
80. refer to social worker				
81. confer with parents				
82. more time on basic skills				
83. eliminate art and music				
84. notify parents				
85. Chapter I program				
86. teacher aides				
87. say "leave at age 16"				
88. before school programs				
89. after school programs				
90. summer school programs				

Go on to the next page

Estimate the degree to which each of the following is a problem among the students you teach:

	Not a Serious Problem				Very Serious Problem
	1	2	3	4	5

91. Attendance
92. Attitude toward school
93. Completing assignments
94. Arguments with teachers
95. Classroom discipline

Go on to the next page

Suppose we posit a number line as portraying the absence or presence of a factor (1 = low, 9 = high)

Low High

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Suppose further that the following options reflect the degree of diversity present within your school on various factors:

A. 1 - 9 (full range of variability)
B. 1 - 5 (low end of scale, predominately)
C. 5 - 9 (high end of scale, predominately)
D. 3 - 7 (middle range, predominately)

Given the rationale above, how would you describe the range or diversity among your students on each of the following:

96. intelligence A B C D

97. motivation A B C D

98. experience (trips, etc.) A B C D

99. academic achievement A B C D

100. Which one of the following represents how you think teachers in this school ought to provide instruction?

A. each teacher should decide what to do with his or her students

B. there should be a common program, but each teacher should be encouraged to make variations for individual students

C. there should be a different but standard strategy for different types of students

D. there should be a common program that each teacher is expected to follow

APPENDIX E

PHI DELTA KAPPA LISTING OF CRITICAL LISTING

Rank Order	Issue	Mean Value
→ 1	at risk/neglected/abused students	4.69
2	changing demographic factors	4.36
3	public support and confidence in education	4.34
4	improving the effectiveness of schools	4.33
5	financing public schools	4.16
6	selection and preparation of teachers	4.08
7	attitudes of professionals	4.03
8	AIDS/AIDS testing/fear of AIDS	4.01
9	special problems in urban schools	3.82
10	accountability	3.71
11	evaluating teachers	3.70
12	top-down/mandated reform	3.65
13	court decisions about curriculum content	3.65
14	privatization of public education	3.34

APPENDIX F

HOLDING POWER STATISTIC SUMMARY SHEET

Chapter Name _____ Chapter Number _____

Total number of students listed as first-time ninth grade enrollees in 1984 (column "A") _____

Total number of students who graduated from high school in 1988 (column "B") _____

Total number of students who graduated early from high school (column "C") _____

Total number of students who requested transcript be sent to another school (column "D") _____

Total number of students who were jailed (column "E") _____

Total number of students who died (column "F") _____

Total number of "1" _____ (illness)
Total number of "2" _____ (auto accident)
Total number of "3" _____ (auto + drinking)
Total number of "4" _____ (other accident)
Total number of "5" _____ (murdered)
Total number of "6" _____ (drug overdose)
Total number of "7" _____ (suicide)

Total same as column "F" _____

Total number of students who are still enrolled in school (column "G") _____

$$HPS = \frac{B + C + G}{A - (D + E + F)}$$

$$HPS = \frac{\qquad\qquad}{\qquad\qquad} =$$

Z.

VITA

Donald E. Sjoberg

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A COMPARISON OF PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AT-RISK FACTORS: THE PHI DELTA KAPPA STUDY AND SELECTED OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOLS

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Presque Isle, Maine, August 21, 1955, the son of Ernest O. and Elma M. Sjoberg.

Education: Graduated from Richmond High School, Richmond, Maine in June, 1973; received Bachelor of Music in Education degree from Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May, 1979; received Master of Music degree from the University of Texas, Austin, Austin, Texas in December, 1980; received Master of Education degree from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May, 1990; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1991.

Professional Experience: Assistant Band Director, Henryetta Public Schools, 1981; Band Director, Prue Public Schools, 1981-83; High School Principal, Prue Public School, 1983-85; High School Principal, Kellyville Pubic Schools, 1985-present.